

Remarks

Claims 20-27 are now pending.

Claim 20 is patentable over the cited art based upon the fact that it expressly requires a sharpener assembly:

having a sharpening stone, a deburring stone, a retractable shield and a sharpening actuator, wherein the sharpening stone, the retractable shield and the sharpening actuator are each biased into normal positions such that the retractable shield is normally positioned so as to substantially shield the sharpening stone from slicing debris during food product slicing operations, **wherein the sharpening stone, the retractable shield and the sharpening actuator are arranged such that movement of the sharpening actuator to initiate sharpening causes both (i) the retractable shield to move out of its normal position into a retracted position and (ii) the sharpening stone to move out of its normal position into sharpening contact with the blade, including moving linearly downwardly toward the blade.**

Addressing the last obviousness rejection based upon the combination of GB '785 in view of Tweed et al. applicants note that the GB '785 patent is directed to a type of sharpener that includes a knife guard housing that is normally positioned to protect the edge of the knife and to shield the stones from debris during slicing operations. In order to sharpen, the sharpener housing, including the knife guard portion and stones, is moved in its entirety into the position shown in Fig. 2 of GB 1,213,643. This fact is readily ascertainable because GB '785 specifically states (see page 1, lines 21-67) that its sharpener is of the type described in GB 1,213,643. In GB '785 movement of the knife guard is not caused by movement of any sharpening actuator. Instead, the entire sharpener is moved to the position shown in Fig. 2 of GB '643, at which point there is no further need for the knife guard to be moved by the sharpening actuator. In point of fact, there is no need for a retractable shield in the device of GB '785 because the device is already constructed with a knife guard that provides the function of shielding the stones from debris during slicing without the use of a retractable shield. Accordingly, there would be no reason for one of ordinary skill in the art to modify GB '785 to include a retractable shield, such as that of Tweed et al., in which movement of a sharpening actuator causes movement of the retractable shield. Therefore, the invention defined by claim 20 is not obvious in view of the combination of GB '785 and Tweed et al. Dependent claims 21-26 are allowable for at least the same reasons.

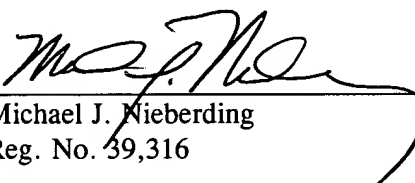
Claim 27 is patentable over the cited art based upon the fact that it expressly requires a sharpener assembly:

having a sharpening stone, a deburring stone, a retractable shield and a sharpening actuator, wherein the sharpening stone, the retractable shield and the sharpening actuator are each biased into normal positions such that the retractable shield is normally positioned so as to substantially shield the sharpening stone from slicing debris during food product slicing operations, wherein **the sharpening stone, the retractable shield and the sharpening actuator are arranged such that movement of the sharpening actuator to initiate sharpening causes both (i) the retractable shield to move out of its normal position into a retracted position and (ii) the sharpening stone to move out of its normal position into sharpening contact with the blade, wherein the deburring stone, sharpening stone and retractable shield are associated with a frame that is contacted and moved downwardly by the sharpening actuator.**

The foregoing comments with respect to claim 20 apply to any potential obviousness rejection of claim 27 based upon the combination of GB '785 and Tweed et al.

Please contact the undersigned attorney with any questions regarding this response.

Respectfully submitted,


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